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**REMARKS TO TARANAKI FEDERATED FARMERS
AND TARANAKI CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

U.S. AMBASSADOR WILLIAM McCORMICK

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**"From Restaurateur to Resident in New Zealand:
A U.S. Ambassador's Story"**

Thank you for inviting me to speak here today. I'm midway through my, let's see, 142nd day as U.S. Ambassador in New Zealand. Who could love a job more? The job is great for many reasons, but for one it allows me to meet many New Zealanders. And the opportunity to meet you -- the farmers and business people of Taranaki -- is truly special. But I used to run a restaurant business, and I must confess: As I look around the room and see so many smiling faces, I'm thinking: I could probably fit at least five more tables in here.

You've asked me to talk about how I developed my restaurant business, and my hopes for my time here as U.S. Ambassador. My road into the restaurant trade was long and complicated, so I'll try to keep it short and sweet. I mean, you've all given me a warm and friendly welcome, and I certainly don't want to wear it out. Then, I'd like to talk about how -- coming in from the outside -- I see our two countries' relationship and where I hope it will go.

I started my career in the financial industry in the State of Rhode Island, where I was born in its largest city. Like thousands of Rhode Islanders before me, I can say I'm from Providence -- the city. A new job beckoned me in San Francisco, so a friend and I packed up a car and drove 4,500 kilometers west to California. The trouble is, we underestimated the time it took to cross the States, and by the time we arrived on the West Coast, the job was gone. I ended up working for a while in a brokerage office.

I was pretty young then and feeling, maybe, a little lonely. My friends and I wanted to meet girls. Some of them seemed to hang out in bars, so we thought, let's open a bar that would appeal to girls. With a hundred-dollar investment each, we did just that.

Know your customer. My business has been guided by demographics. After the Second World War, dining at home became much less formal in America. The baby boomers ate their breakfast cereal at the same table at which they had their Christmas dinner. Meanwhile, beef herds were being rebuilt after the war, taking until the early 1960s to be substantial enough for prices to come down. That's when we opened steakhouses -- casual restaurants with reasonable prices -- for the baby-boomer generation.

But in 1973, the oil crisis hit. It caused many people to become introspective, to re-evaluate how they were living their lives. They stopped eating steak. They started running and exercising. They wanted lighter, healthier fare -- they even ate at restaurants that were "organic" or "vegetarian." So, we had to get out of the steakhouse business, and in 1973, we purchased the landmark restaurant "Jake's Famous Crawfish" in Portland, Oregon -- now my hometown.

That was the beginning for McCormick & Schmick's Seafood Restaurants. Today, we have 64 restaurants in 24 states. As we have grown, we have followed the changing needs and desires of baby boomers. Whereas their parents might have gone out at night only for a special occasion, on any given night we see customers come into our restaurants who were there earlier in the week. A 62-year-old lawyer who had heart bypass surgery told me, "You've got me for life."

My mother lived and died with the same cookbook given to her on her wedding day. Today's home kitchens have dozens of cookbooks on the shelf ... although they might just sit there because no one uses them.

Our biggest competitor, by the way, is the microwave and prepared foods in grocery stores. Today, our restaurants aim to meet the needs of two-income, two-career families. Our customers are people who might have been political activists in the '60s and '70s, but now are more concerned about retirement plans and the equity of their homes. They are more affluent, and they have traveled widely. We now serve things in our restaurants that, 10 years ago, would have amazed me: things like tuna tartare, sashimi, sushi. And our tables all have white tablecloths.

We also have responded to the responsibility we have to the environment. We do not serve endangered fish, like Patagonia toothfish. When the average weight of swordfish in the North Atlantic dropped to under 100 pounds, we went elsewhere -- to Costa Rica and Fiji -- to swordfish populations that were not stressed.

And, we have responded to trends. Not too long ago, oysters were the preserve of the rich. Now, our menus, at certain times of the year, offer four or five different types of oysters. By the way, I believe that New Zealand's clean, pristine image gives it a great opportunity to grow its aquaculture and fish farming industries. I mean, when you buy an oyster, you want to know it comes from clean waters. Aquaculture doesn't take a lot of infrastructure, and New Zealand can take advantage of reverse seasons: When oyster season ends in the Northern Hemisphere, it begins here.

Anyway, as you can see, my restaurant career wasn't exactly planned -- it mostly responded to circumstances. Thankfully, it all worked out. As U.S. Ambassador to New Zealand, however, I do have plans. And I have faith that they also will work out.

I believe our countries would be best served if our relationship were mature: one in which we continue to reaffirm our commonality and work together because of our shared interests, and one in which we also can be honest with each other about our differences. A mature relationship is one in which both sides trust what the other says.

Too often, our relationship has been reduced to assumptions and catchphrases, spoken from rote. While we sometimes talk at length about our shared history and extol our common values, we also at times grossly simplify our differences, especially over the great divide of the strategic alliance that withered two decades ago. As the U.S. Ambassador, I hope to maintain a sense of perspective on the relationship. I hope to foster a deeper understanding between us by talking straight and listening well. I believe there is a more realistic way for us to deal with each other. I hope, for example, when we choose different approaches to try to resolve world problems, that we understand why -- that we don't immediately condemn each other's decisions and that we don't make assumptions about each other. I hope we will work continually toward a goal of mutual respect.

And, if New Zealanders share this goal and want to work toward it, I know that we can improve our countries' relationship.

So, I celebrate the wonderful experiences and values we share in common and the impressive things we've accomplished together. Let me point to our scientific cooperation. For 45 years, we have worked together, along with other signatories to the Antarctic Treaty, to ensure that Antarctica remains an international preserve for science and peace. We work together on climate-change issues, as demonstrated by our Bilateral Climate Change Partnership, which swaps scientific data to aid in the efficient management of ecosystems, among its other projects. We share a desire to protect the oceans, to protect deep-sea biodiversity.

In the World Trade Organization talks aimed at breaking down barriers to free trade in agriculture and in industrial trade, our negotiators work shoulder-to-shoulder. In APEC, we share the common goal of liberalizing trade in the region, and we share the common view that trade will not flow freely unless we also ensure the security of our borders and of our peoples.

The list goes on. You probably know it better than I: combating trafficking in persons, human rights issues, assistance to refugees. We cooperate in the fight against terrorism, against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and on other international security issues.

We also have our differences. As Ambassador, I will not shy away from them. I will try to improve our understanding of them. Our differences over security relationships go

back two decades and sadly are too often discussed publicly in the same old way, because each side is convinced it knows the views of the other. Sadly, we continue to act on our assumptions, because we all have heard or read so much on the topic for so long.

We also are saddened when anti-American sentiments are kicked around like rugby balls for domestic political consumption. We like to think our countries' relationship rates better than that. In this modern age of the Internet and instant communications, one should never assume that words uttered on one side of the globe won't be heard -- and taken to heart -- on the other.

Our relationship IS one that we must value, cherish and nourish. I hope, during my years here, to underscore that.

But of all my goals as Ambassador, most of all, I plan to meet and get to know as many New Zealanders as I can. Since my arrival in your country in November, I've been very impressed by the people I've met, and I look forward to meeting more. As some of you know, my wife Gail came here about 30 years ago for a year-long stay on her cousin's sheep farm in Winton. She said that I would like it here. You know, she was right -- as always.

Thank you for contributing today to my quest to get to know more New Zealanders. I am learning a lot about Taranaki -- about the richness of your land, from oil to gas to cattle to sheep. I am learning about the talents and innovativeness of your people -- from yacht-building to IT to movie-making to the Wind Wand and other works of art. I look forward to hearing your thoughts about our countries' relationship -- and I look forward to hearing from you how we could strengthen the links between our peoples.

Now, I hope I haven't talked too long, and I just hope you'll welcome me back.